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JUN 29 '21 AM 9:45



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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES OFFICE OF CONSERVATION

Ashley Wimberley
Louisiana Board of Ethics
P.O. Box 4368
Baton Rouge, LA 70821

June 28, 2021

Re: Request for Advisory Opinion, Financial Disclosures, Members of the Louisiana
Water Resources Commission

Dear Ms. Wimberley:

Per our conversation last week, please take this letter as a request for an advisory opinion as to whether or not members of the Louisiana Water Resources Commission (WRC) are required to file personal financial disclosures as part of their service. This request is based on notice from Ms. Lindsay Gouedy – a duly appointed member of the WRC – that she has received a letter from the Board of Ethics notifying her of failure to file such a disclosure. In my capacity as staff for the WRC, I am requesting an opinion that will be applicable for all members of the board specific to this particular public service.

It has been the Office of Conservation's understanding that Act 450 of Regular Session 2015 – codified as La. R.S. 42:1124.2.1(D)(1)(b)(vi) – exempts members of the WRC from the filing of financial disclosures as typically required from members of state boards and commissions. Specifically, the relevant statute here reads that a board or commission "shall not mean: (vi) Any board or commission that does not have the authority to expend, disburse, or invest more than fifty thousand dollars of funds in a fiscal year and whose members are not eligible to receive any compensation, per diem, or reimbursement of expenses for service on the board or commission."

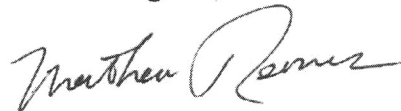
The WRC is an almost purely advisory body, with its membership, powers, and responsibilities enumerated in La. R.S. 38:3097.4. It does not have any fiscal authority to expend, disburse, or invest funds in any amount. Moreover, 38:3097.4(B) specifically states that "Appointed members shall not be compensated for their services, except the commissioner [of Conservation] may promulgate rules and regulations to provide for travel expenses." No rules or regulations for such reimbursement of travel expenses have ever been promulgated, which fact

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would appear to settle the issue of "eligibility," in that members would be eligible for reimbursements if such rules or regulations existed but, as they do not, members are therefore currently not eligible for reimbursements. A change in this status may or may not trigger the necessity of filing personal financial disclosures, which is something I would request the Board of Ethics consider as part of any advisory opinion.

I greatly appreciate your assistance in providing insight into this matter. Please let me know if I may provide any additional information that would be helpful.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Reonas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Matthew" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Reonas".

Matthew Reonas, Ph.D.
Policy Planner

Cc: Blake Canfield (DNR); Johns Adams (OC); Gary Snellgrove (OC);
Lindsay Gouedy (Sparta)

Ashley Wimberley

From: Matthew Reonas
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 2:22 PM
To: Ashley Wimberley
Cc: Blake Canfield; John Adams (DNR); Gary Snellgrove; Lindsay Gouedy
Subject: Water Resources Commission, Request for Advisory Opinion, Financial Disclosures
Attachments: OC to Wimberley, Board of Ethics, WRC Adv. Opin. Request, 6.28.2021.pdf

Dear Ms. Wimberley –

Please see the attached letter requesting an advisory opinion for the Water Resources Commission, as we discussed last week. If I can supply any additional information, please let me know.

I've copied relevant Dept. of Natural Resources & Office of Conservation staff for their information, along with Ms. Gouedy from the Sparta District.

Thank you much!

Kind regards,

Matt

Matthew Reonas, Ph.D.
Policy Planner
Louisiana Office of Conservation
(225) 342-1496

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